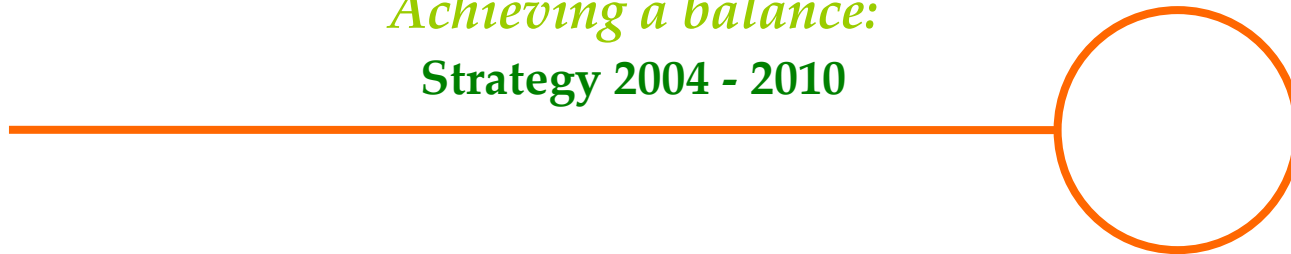


**EAST AYRSHIRE**

# **COALFIELD ENVIRONMENT INITIATIVE**



*Achieving a balance:*  
**Strategy 2004 - 2010**



## *East Ayrshire 2010: The Vision*

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East Ayrshire in 2010 will have a high quality environment contributing to economic growth, community pride and sustainable development. In 2010:

- Restored open cast sites will be an integral part of a network of high quality nature conservation areas, rich in biodiversity, visited and enjoyed by many people.
- Wildlife viewing projects will promote appreciation and understanding of the value of East Ayrshire's wildlife. Local communities will experience, first hand, birds, mammals, amphibians and insects at home in their natural habitats.
- Conservation volunteers will play a key role in implementing and managing CEI projects. Volunteering will help local people develop new skills and appreciate their environment.



## What is the CEI?



The Coalfield Environment Initiative (CEI) is a partnership, between local authority, conservation bodies and industry, working together to enhance, conserve, and promote the environment in East Ayrshire. Our work is driven by a belief that:

- East Ayrshire is a fantastic place for wildlife
- restored open cast coal sites offer great opportunities for creating new wildlife habitats
- community participation in wildlife conservation enhances people's lives
- young people are the decision makers of tomorrow and should be given every opportunity to discover the value of their environment today

## *Aims and objectives of the CEI*

The CEI has been established to increase biodiversity and to improve the quality of the natural environment for local communities of the East Ayrshire coalfield.

The CEI believes that a high quality environment, rich in biodiversity, will make East Ayrshire a valuable and attractive place for people to live, work and play.



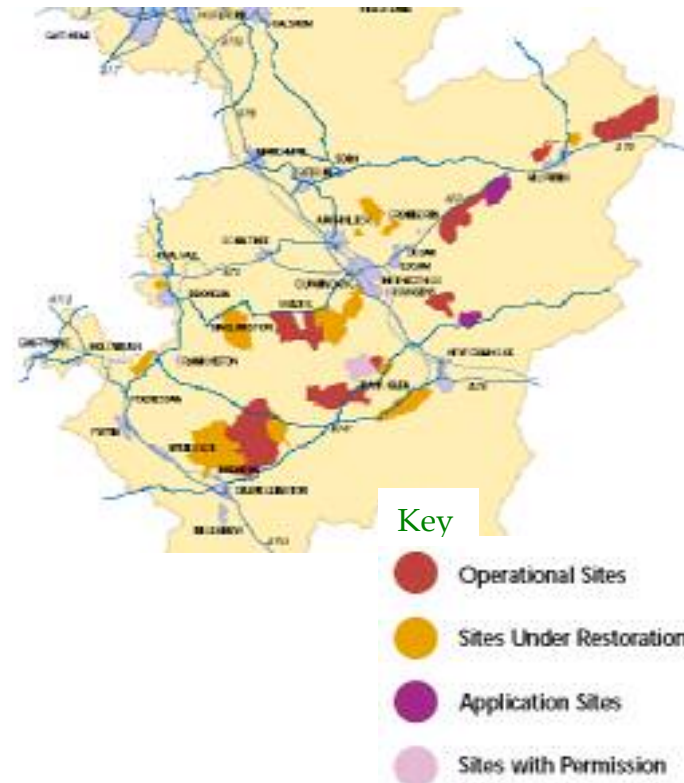
The 3 aims of the CEI are :

- *Environment* – to enhance the natural environment and landscape within the CEI project area
- *Understanding* – to increase understanding and appreciation of East Ayrshire’s wildlife and it’s value, providing and developing opportunities for learning about and experiencing wildlife
- *Engagement* – to increase community participation in wildlife conservation, enabling local people to contribute to environmental improvements and develop new skills

## The project area

The focus of the CEI is the East Ayrshire coalfield, principally the areas around Cumnock, New Cumnock, Muirkirk and Dalmellington.

These communities have been affected by the decline of the deep mining industry, resulting in environmental dereliction, unemployment, and depopulation. They are now also affected by opencast mining as shown in the map of current, restored, and proposed opencast coal sites.



## Challenges for wildlife in East Ayrshire



Wildlife in East Ayrshire is facing greater challenges now than ever before. Across the country climate change, intensifying agricultural practices, and the expansion of urban areas are causing habitat deterioration and fragmentation. In East Ayrshire these pressures are compounded by the effects of coal mining.

Deep mining in the area ceased in the 1970s but its legacy remains as abandoned industrial sites and coal bings can

be seen through the rural landscape.

Coal is now extracted using open cast methods. This creates short term scars on the landscape, contributing to habitat fragmentation and displacing wildlife. As significant reserves of coal remain in East Ayrshire, it is likely that open cast coal mining will remain a part of the landscape for many years to come.

## *Opportunities for wildlife in East Ayrshire*

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Old industrial sites can be turned into valuable wildlife habitats

**East Ayrshire is an important place for wildlife. Vast areas of its moorland are internationally important, and are designated as a Special Protection Area (SPA) for their upland breeding birds. However, given the pressures facing wildlife, more opportunities should be created to increase the quality and variety of habitats, securing this valuable resource for future generations.**

**Restored open cast coal sites provide an excellent opportunity for enhancing and creating new habitat networks, which not only benefit biodiversity but also help to reduce the feeling of dereliction at a landscape scale.**

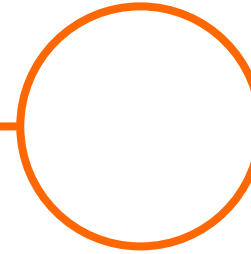
## Strategy 2010: Timescales

The CEI will implement its 3 aims in the following ways over the next 7 years:

	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
<i>Environment</i>	<p>Hannahston open cast coal site is selected for wetland habitat creation project.</p> <p>Chalmerston open cast coal site is selected for woodland habitat creation.</p>	<p>Hannahston wetland is created, native plants are transplanted, footpaths and a boardwalk are created, and interpretation boards designed by the local primary school are installed.</p> <p>Chalmerston woodland is planted.</p>	<p>From 2005, one new habitat creation project will be identified and planned each year. The project site will have to be a former coal site and will be identified using a site review process, with selection criteria based upon site availability, proximity to population, and the contribution it will make to the Local and National Biodiversity Action Plan.</p>				
<i>Understanding</i>	<p>Design a logo competition is launched to primary schools.</p>	<p>Bird viewing project piloted at two primary schools.</p>	<p>Bird viewing project is expanded to include more primary schools and a wider range of animals. The project is expanded so that live streaming video can be viewed over the web.</p>		<p>A review of the wildlife viewing project will create further opportunities, which could include establishing a visitor centre and the publication of educational material.</p>		
<i>Engagement</i>	<p>Make A Difference Day kicks off Conservation volunteering in East Ayrshire.</p>	<p>Conservation volunteers help to enhance biodiversity by taking part in hedgerow planting, riparian planting and dry stane dyking. Volunteers undertake the planting programme at Hannahston.</p>			<p>As the volunteering programme develops, volunteers themselves begin to plan and manage the programme.</p>		

## Strategy 2010: Current Projects

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<i>Make A Difference Day 2004</i>	The Make A Difference Day conservation volunteering project was a one off volunteering event, aiming to promote conservation volunteering and to improve a popular woodland walk within the town of Cumnock. Supported by MSPs, local councillors and local people, the day was a great success with 17 bags of litter collected, a new footpath laid, and bridges upgraded.
<i>Design A Logo Competition</i>	The Design A Logo competition was launched to increase awareness of the CEI and to teach primary school children about coal mining and the value of East Ayrshire's wildlife. Using this knowledge children were challenged to design a logo for the CEI. The competition was a great success with over 240 entries being received from 7 primary schools.
<i>Hannahston OCCS: Wetland Habitat Creation</i>	This innovative project will enhance the ecological value of Hannahston's wetland habitats by creating a system of shallow pools and drainage channels that will extend the area of the current wetland habitat. Management of dominant species, such as bulrush, and transplanting native species, such as reeds, will help to increase biodiversity. Community involvement in the project will be encouraged through the CEI's conservation volunteering programme, and interpretation boards will be designed using the skills of the local primary school. A circular footpath and boardwalk will be created, providing access that, when combined with the interpretation, will aid understanding and enjoyment of the natural environment.

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<i>Chalmerston OCCS: Native Woodland Habitat Creation</i>	This exciting project will establish 40 hectares of native riparian woodland along the banks of two streams that traverse the Chalmerston OCCS. Native riparian woodland is a habitat under threat in East Ayrshire and its expansion is a priority in both the Local Biodiversity Action Plan and the Ayrshire and Arran Woodland Strategy. The project is a partnership with East Ayrshire Woodlands who will oversee the planting and future management of the site.
<i>Garden Bird Viewing</i>	This imaginative project will establish garden bird viewing facilities at two primary schools within the Cumnock and Doon Valley area of East Ayrshire. Using innovative technology, nest boxes with cameras concealed within the roof (" <i>nestcams</i> "), will be monitored by motion capture software that digitally records any movement. The software will allow children to view live pictures from the nestcams from any networked computer within the school. Over the months a video diary will be created, which will then be displayed to the public via a mobile viewing facility.
<i>Conservation Volunteering</i>	Conservation volunteering opportunities are currently absent in East Ayrshire. The CEI aims to reverse this trend by planning a conservation programme that will give local people the opportunity to develop practical conservation skills, whilst meeting new people, and contributing to conservation projects that improve the local environment. Volunteers will play an integral part in habitat creation projects and their longer term maintenance and management.

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## Strategy 2010: Funding

### *Habitat creation*

The Hannahston wetland habitat creation project is funded through the Scottish Executive's Biodiversity Action Grant Scheme.

Habitat creation projects are expected to cost around £20-30k per annum and will be funded through sources such as the Heritage Lottery Fund, the Cumnock and Doon Valley Minerals Trust Fund and the Landfill Tax Credit scheme.

### *Wildlife Viewing*

This project is expected to cost around £6k per annum and will be funded through sources ranging from Scottish charitable trusts to the national lottery.



### *Conservation Volunteering*

Partly funded through monies raised for habitat creation projects, conservation volunteering is expected to cost around £4-5k per annum. The Make A Difference Day conservation volunteering day was funded by the Unemployed Voluntary Action Fund.

### *Core Costs*

Core costs have been kindly donated by Scottish Coal Company Ltd, the UK Coal Authority, CAT and Bridgestone. Donations in kind from RSPB Scotland provide line management and training, and East Ayrshire Council provide accounting facilities. Other partners provide donations in kind of specialist staff and advice.

## Contacts

### Coalfield Environment Initiative

**Paul Sutherland**

**Coalfield Environment Officer**

Garan House, 28 Main Street, Muirkirk, Ayrshire, KA18 3RA

Tel: 07766 185987

Website: [www.ea-cei.org.uk](http://www.ea-cei.org.uk)

Email: [info@ea-cei.org.uk](mailto:info@ea-cei.org.uk)

### Our Partners:

#### East Ayrshire Council

London Road, Kilmarnock, East Ayrshire,  
KA3 7BU

Tel: 01563 576000

[www.east-ayrshire.gov.uk](http://www.east-ayrshire.gov.uk)

#### Scottish Coal Company Limited

Castlebridge Business Park  
Gartlove, Nr. Alloa, Clackmannanshire,  
FK10 3PZ

Tel: 01259 733800

[www.scottishcoal.co.uk](http://www.scottishcoal.co.uk)

#### Scottish Wildlife Trust

Cramond House, Cramond Glebe Road,  
EDINBURGH EH4 6NS

Tel: 0131 312 7765

[www.swt.org.uk](http://www.swt.org.uk)



#### RSPB Scotland

10 Park Quadrant, Glasgow, G3 6BS

Tel: 0141 331 0993

[www.rspb.org.uk](http://www.rspb.org.uk)

#### Scottish Natural Heritage

19 Wellington Square, Ayr, Ayrshire,  
KA7 1EZ

Tel: 01292 261392

[www.snh.org.uk](http://www.snh.org.uk)

#### East Ayrshire Woodlands

Underwood Depot, Auchinleck Road  
Cumnock, Ayrshire KA18 1RS

Tel: 01290 426 973

[www.east-ayrshire.gov.uk](http://www.east-ayrshire.gov.uk)